DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 028 747 HE 000 883

By-Adams, Paul L.

Professors and Citizen Activism.

Pub Date 5 Apr 69

Note-14p.; Paper presented at 61st annual meeting of the Southern Society of Philosophy and Psychology, Miami, Florida, April 5, 1969

EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$0.80

Descriptors-*Activism, *Citizenship Responsibility, *Faculty, Higher Education, Participation, *Political Attitudes, *Professors

A college professor has several interacting roles--as scholar, specialized technician, employed professional, and citizen. It is to the subject of the professor as citizen, or more precisely, as politico-social activist, that this paper is directed. Proceeding as a taxonomist, the author offers a tentative empirical classification of the positions taken or arguments advanced by professors in the 2 camps, activist and passavist. The class of "effectively uninvolved professors" is a large one containing many species whose distinctive behaviors and ideologies are evident even though the class shares a general trait of feeble or no participation in the social process. These types are: the nihilist, dropout, retreatist or delinquent, the eclectic, pluralist or dually committed, the diphasic, obsessive, partially committed, the laissez-faire conservative, the professor paralyzed by fear, the believer that activism is uncouth, unscholarly or unprofessional. The activist professors include: reactionaries, issues protesters, and revolutionaires, of which these are 2 varieties depending upon their acceptance or rejection of the pacifist ethic. "...pacifism may be the most telling single criterion of humane citizenship, today and tomorrow." The professor who doesn't cop out knows that as an ethical being he must accept the obligations of citizenship. (JS)

ED028747

PROFESSORS AND CITIZEN ACTIVISM

Paul L. Adams, M.D.*

(Read at the 61st annual meeting of the Southern Society of Philosophy and Psychology, April 5, 1969, Miami, Florida)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

HE 000 883

* Paul L. Adams is a child psychiatrist teaching at the University of Florida, Gainesville where he is Professor of Psychiatry and Pediatrics. He does not voice herein the official views of the Regents or their subordinate administrators at that institution. Dr. Adams has been active in civil rights, peace, and American Federation of Teachers matters as well as his work in child psychiatry.

4-29-69

Paul L. Adams

PROFESSORS AND CITIZEN ACTIVISM

Being a professor entails a complicated life of multifaceted and interacting roles. The professor has the following four tracks along which he runs:

1) scholar. As a scholar he is playing a role with both conservative and innovative meanings. As a scholar who teaches he has the basic residual role of a guardian, conserver, condenser and transmitter of knowledge. As an investigator, however, he finds himself often in league with -- or operating in the same mode as -- the rebel, the iconoclast, the disillusioner. Now some teachers do not teach only what is accepted but stir up their students with questions that require answering. Similarly, some investigators are busily carrying out research that is so intimately entrenched in the approved channels of their special fields that anyone would be hard-put to call it either imaginative or innovative; it is only industrious at best. There is, then, an exceptional researcher who manages to remain aloof from the fires of rebellion; and there are teachers who question as much as they transmit knowledge. But a professor lives out his dual functions as a conserver and as a critic when he acts as a scholar.

2) specialized technician. Every professor has some special tools and some special know-how connected with his field of professional work. The physician with his technology for diagnosis and healing, the philosopher with his brightly shining verbal and cognitive skills, and the experimental psychologist with his laboratory-managerial skills: we are all technicians with practical

arts and gadgets that societies such as ours value to some degree. We struggle very hard at times to keep our knowledge esoteric and sequestered from the masses (Hughes, 1963). Occasionally, it is by moonlighting or consulting that professors are made aware of their technical worth, for having marketable skills.

3) <u>employed professional</u>. Even when his official professional ideology, by cultural lag, proclaims the model of the private practitioner there is no escaping the observation that professional persons are more and more the hirelings of agencies and corporations. Professors increasingly live from pay checks, not from their students' private fees; and from teaching required courses, not electives. All of this contributes to job security but diminishes the free play of idiosyncrasy to be seen in an ideal entrepreneur. We are not private entrepreneurs. We are employees of large and enlarging organizations. Our employers and administrators are not our "fellow officers" of the universities; they have many more of the characteristics of industry bosses as time passes. The rhetoric of the American Association of University Professors cannot undo that reality. Our administrators, and we professors ourselves, have ever widening connections with agents such as professional associations and guilds outside the particular campus on which we are stationed: we are a part of an apparatus that reaches at least across this continent. I am not alluding merely to the Pentagon's shadow on the ivy which is indeed a deepening shadow; but also to the complex tie-in of church-college-industry-military-executive branch of federal government-foundation-professional association. Inter-

locking nationwide bureaucracies impinge upon the professor nowadays. Still, he remains in one aspect of his operations a hired or employed professional in the local workshop.

4) citizen. The professor is a participant in the power relations that characterize his society. That is to say, he is a political man. He is a member of his nation and is involved in civic life. He cannot escape the fact that his citizenship in the United States gives him a role as a person, and oftentimes as a professor, in the nation -- a nation characterized by features such as the reign of greed or profit and economic inequality; a vaunting of warfare and derogation of welfare; racism; alienation; and then on the other hand a rarely surpassed edifice of civil liberty; a recurrently forceful ideology of democracy, etc. He is a partisan, even if he is a liberal, in a massive multi-group pluralistic nation dominated by a relatively small complex of military, industrial and governing men. He can always be put down by Socrates's judges.

II.

It is to the professor as a citizen, or more definitely as a politico-social activist, that I would like to pay most attention. However, the professor's role as a citizen is always shaped and colored by certain values that enshroud his other roles as scholar, technician, and employee.

Professors I have known, both as colleagues and as patients or as parents of young patients, are a fascinating lot — so verbal, so intellectual, so sick, so well, so callous and competitive, so

precious and so selfless. What a crowd, so deserving of fuller study by psychologists and philosophers! Professors collectively are a complicated mixed bag; and the same can be stated with respect to the individual professor: a complicated mixed bag.

As a citizen the professor is no simple cipher either. He goes in and out of active participation in political affairs, and in or out on the oddest and most sophistic of philosophic grounds. My goal is to proceed as a taxonomist would, however crudely and incompletely the labor is wrought, and to offer a tentative empirical classification of the positions taken or the arguments advanced by professors in the 2 camps, activist and passivist. These terms are inadequate certainly but they are meant to suggest a natural division between professors who demonstrate, vote, teach in, speak out, and join up as opposed to those who keep aloof from such activities. Terms such as "highly participant" and "minimally participant" might carry less disparaging connotations than the terms "active" or "passive", and if they are more denotative the member of the audience must substitute them for the feebler terminology that I employ.

Ideology and Behavior of the Effectively Uninvolved Professor

1. Nihilist, dropout, retreatist, delinquent. There are professors who are devoid of either conventional or unconventional values, who in the terminology of Ignazio Silone (1955), are nihilists who determinedly set out to deflate and to unmask all values. They are retreatist, in Robert K. Merton's sense of the term, and they are delinquent in the Latin sense of delinquere as drop out. They are

not joiners, and they are not fighters. They are non-believers who approximate being non-doers as far as their role as citizens is concerned. Some of them have told me that they used to be fighters but that they have despaired of achieving anything by fighting, and they prefer to withdraw from citizenship into their libraries and laboratories. They have concluded that values are not of worth as guides to our destiny but are only presentable masks for entirely selfish interests. They may say it in exalted, "professorial" language, but their message content is like that of the hippie adolescent who is dropping out of active citizenship and valuing only the doing of one's own thing.

2. Eclectic, pluralist, dually committed. Some professors hold to the liberal ideal so profoundly that in matters intellectual and civic, they see both sides so clearly that they are incapacitated in moving toward a partisan position. There are many more true cowards than true liberals, and there are many more avowed liberals than there are true liberals. Professors have a penchant for portraying themselves as in the tradition of Erasmus. The position of the authentic eclectic is subjected to abuse by many professors. Yet there is a rare Morris R. Cohen, to name a liberal philosopher whom I admire, and a Gardner Murphy, to mention a psychologist whose genuine eclecticism I admire. Both of these men knew so much and with such depth that their students respected their eclecticism, saw them as "telling it like it is" even when they told it as liberal, dual and mixed. There is indeed an elegance about the humanist Erasmus perched above the grubbier battles of everyday life, and there is an inescapable attractiveness about the peacemaker who

loves the warriors on both sides.. It is such people who end our wars and who remind us of our common humanity. I would not attempt to derogate the man who actively advances both sides because he feels both sides are right. Such a man is Milovan Djilas (1966) who, often imprisoned by the Yugoslavian Establishment, can state a position, devoid of rancor, that all will be well if we in the west strive for a socialist economony whilst advancing individual liberties and if we in the east strive for political democracy with civil liberties whilst vigilantly maintaining a socialist economy. Czechoslovakia notably is still trying the latter course against great obstacles from the USSR. The liberal ideal is always fighting uphill, it seems.

3. Diphasic, obsessive, with limited commitment. Here is the professor who is effectively uninvolved because his conflicting involvements are weak. He is involved on two sides, but weakly on both. He cancels out a commitment to citizenship as soon as the commitment starts. He prides himself on his maintenance of his "critical faculties", meaning that he never makes even a false start without an abundance of self-doubt. Such a professor will contribute to the teachers' union behind the scenes but will not join because of his loyalties to a vice-president on the other side. He will repent his lukewarm conservatism as soon as he has avowed it, and will proffer a lukewarm and fleeting liberalism or libertarianism in its stead. He truly vacillates with only a limited investment in either of his phases. His motto could well be that anything worth doing is worth doing in moderation. Often

the person with limited commitment to any values will denounce partisanship, praise his passage from bland phase to bland phase, and extol obsessive doubting. For some this lukewarmness is what it is to be "professorial".

4. The laissez-faire conservative. Here is a species of mimimally "involved" who is comfortably committed to the Establishment, to the status quo. By doing nothing apparently he in reality supports what is: the control of the university not by professors and students but by administrators —— —— who are trained typically not in education but in political, industrial, and military bureaucracies, and who when at a university have only formal authority not functional authority (Peabody, 1962); the warfare state, military conscription, the trammeling of the university by the Pentagon and the Department of Defense, the advancement of patriotic imperialism; the enthronement of greed not welfare as the dominant economic motive; the perpetuation of racism; the subjugation of females; the development of violence and repression in the form of rioting police; and the rest of the ugliness in America as it is.

At the local university level it is this conservative professor who, not militant but laissez-faire, stands for such forms of law and order as arming cops against students, urging administrators to be strong, voting for resolutions that blur real differences between the administrator and the faculty hireling, and in general proclaiming that activism only leads to "polarization" of issues and groups. The implications are that polarization separates people who belong together

(such as state senators and university presidents) and that polarization is the end of civilized discourse (as if sharply drawn issues necessarily will make murderers out of the opponents). These cautions against confrontation and polarization are, underneath, only conservative counsels to let what is good enough remain as it is, and to reduce activity in order to let the powerful enjoy uncontested power over the powerless.

5. Paralyzed by fear. Some professors whom I have known initially come on as indifferent and inactive, only to show later on in some safe self-disclosure that they do have values which condone active citizenship and active participation in town and gown activities. Several of these professors move off to northern universities and there become declared activists; hence it is only in the South that they are afraid to get involved. Others move north for hibernation after being involved in activism in the Southeast. The fear of being lynched is not a thing of the past in the USA. Albert Camus (1946) knew our condition when he wrote that the foremost reality of our time is fear, the fear of being either a victim of murder or an executioner, the fear of living in a society where murder is legitimate. Professors know this fear and they know the softer preludes to murder: denial of tenure, denial of academic freedom, cutting off funds for positions (you have a guaranteed job but it carries no salary), ostracism, foot-dragging, letters and conversations aimed to intimidate the professor, the professor's wife and even his children. Threats of bombings and actual bombings are not beyond occurring in most university towns where professors are radically

activist. Hence, some professors lie low, seeming to be uninvolved, but in reality they are waiting opportunistically for a milieu more favorable to their vigorous activities as citizens. They are not uncommitted really; they are scared radicals.

6. Believer that activism is uncouth, unscholarly or unprofessional.

The sixth variety, or species, of minimally participant professor is one who invokes values pertaining to his being teacher, investigator, professional, and specialist. In the name of these values he dons the professional man's muzzle (B. Spock, 1965), and renounces all but conformist citizenship activities. He says, with the establishment organizations among professors, that strikes are unprofessional; unions are unprofessional; professors contract to do as they are told when they accept appointments at a university; the only truly "professional" organization for teachers is an organization such as the National Education Association which includes bosses as well as employees in its ranks, or an organization such as AAUP which confines it work to "nice" projects------especially, as Harry Elmer Barnes (1965) put it, to the writing of eloquent obituaries when professors have already been denied irretrievably their academic freedom and tenure. The esthetic sensibility of a snobbish professor who encounters something "not nice" is a formidable foe. When outraged by the impropriety of a colleague's defiant stand such a professor who vaunts non-action climbs to dazzling heights of scorn and disdain; the kind of thing that is actually not very "nice" for it can cut a tender soul to shreds. One such scornful colleague told me that he thought it would be the death of our teacher's

union at the University of Florida if we installed a certain "gauche and indelicate" professor as president, adding, "He shows the city slums in everything he says".

Six of these types are enough to characterize the professors who, with Prince Sihanouk of Cambodia, would "rather switch than fight"; and those who are conservatives, liberals, fearful radicals, and nihilists but who muster up a host of arguments that support their participating feebly as citizen activists.

III.

Let us turn next to the classes of activist professors. There are activists of many species also; but among professors activists are a minority, and detailed taxonomy may not be warranted. However, among professors there is more activism than among students. My experience would drive me to concur with the observation of Richard E. Peterson (1968) that no more than 2 per cent of students are "left-activist" whereas it is closer to 10 per cent of every faculty group that I have known. (And who says the youth initiate change?)

A. Reactionists. Not all activists are leftists and not all right-wingers are easygoing conformists. There is a "radical right" among professors. They are often in arts and sciences, or in medicine; but mostly they are in engineering, agriculture, and business schools. There are, to be blunt about it, trade school professors who are rightwing militants when it comes to citizenship. They are vocal — for war, for greed, for flag and patriotism, and for a capitalistic system that was. These are the reactionaries who counter-picket me and my friends, and to be honest they are

as small a minority as are we. But they often seem to have better connections.

B. Issues protesters. Some leftist professors are anti-ideological but can be counted on to hit out hard on isolated issues. To have a general program or rationale is regarded by such people as boringly Old Left. They go for spontaneity and unpredictability to such a degree that they sometimes seem to be against thinking itself. Nevertheless, there they are, ready to dissent when the issue arises.

C. Revolutionists. These are the professors who want to change the world. They differ amongst themselves in their attitudes toward violence. The 2 varieties, I feel, in the final analysis are what in Anglo-Saxon speech we can call the haters and the lovers. These are imprecise terms, a recurrent problem that one, but my general intent of meaning can be conveyed. The "hater" is a person who is illiberal, totalitarian, resentful and vengeful (Roodkowsky, 1969). He often feels that short of achieving violent cataclysm there is nothing of consequence, nothing worthy of doing; so he writes and plans violent Revolution with little daily involvement in practical affairs and issues. The "lover" on the other hand does not lust to take anyone's blood; he will allow coexistence to his enemy; he knows forgiveness and leniency. Perhaps he is not totally "politicized". He is more likely to be vigorously involved in the here-and-now of revolutionary living. He emphasizes the relations of men and women and children as much as the market place. He is more pragmatic, more inclined to live in give-and-take, than is the violent revolutionist, he who hates. It is just the issue of

<u>acceptance of the pacifist ethic</u> that provides a convenient line for dividing the revolutionary professors into these two radically different groups. Indeed pacifism may be the most telling single criterion of humane citizenship, today and tomorrow. Where we stand on violence is what counts.

IV.

To conclude, this essay has not pretended to be "cool" and unfeeling. Nor has it gone over to "soul" entirely, inasmuch as that entails at times the losing of one's head, one's <u>mind</u>. Its author obviously wants to change the world, and in concrete particular to change the structure of the university.

The college professor has been viewed as a highly verbal, subtle being with an endless repertoire of subterfuge and casuistry available to him. He often cops out on citizenship, often claiming that as a scholar-technician-professional the cop-out is the only tenable course. In some cases, though, he is with it — as a liberal, conservative, reactionist and revolutionist — and playing one of these roles he participates in direct social action. He knows that he is a citizen and as an ethical being he accepts obligations of citizenship.

In my own mind the ethic of pacifism can invigorate citizenship. The pacifist ethic has the highest revolutionary potential. Pacifism gives an energetic force that can remake the world, that can remake revolution itself, and that can certainly remake the university professor as a citizen and as a total Being.

REFERENCES

1. Barnes, Harry Elmer, An Intellectual and Cultural History of the Western World, Third Revised Edition. New York: Dover Publications, 1965, p. 1230.

2. Camus, Albert, "Neither victims nor executioners". Politics 4 (1947): 141-147.

3. Djilas, Milovan, "An open letter to President Tito". Encounter XXVII (1966): 88-89.

4. Hughes, Everett C., "Professions". Daedalus (1963): 655-668.

5. Peabody, Robert L., "Perceptions of organizational authority: a comparative analysis". Administrative Science Quarterly VI (1962): 463-482.

6. Peterson, Richard E., "The student left in American higher education". Daedalus 97 (1968): 293-317.

7. Roodkowsky, Nikita D., "The lesson of Russian nihilism". America (Jan. 4, 1969): 13-16.

8. Silone, Ignazio, "The choice of comrades". Dissent 2 (1955): 7-19.

9. Spock, Benjamin, "The professional man's muzzle". American Journal of Orthopsychiatry 35 (1965): 38-40.